

Retiring Lake Cumberland ATC Principal Chester Taylor Has Always Found a Need and Filled It

Respect and admiration are prominent in the opinions of the Lake Cumberland Area Technology Center faculty and staff when it comes to Principal Chester G. Taylor. Described as a man who can “Git R Done,” Taylor is also known as one who has “Got R Done” before most can even get started.

Born into what he describes as “not just a poor family, but a pooor family,” Taylor worked hard, became educated and has lived with the philosophy “Find a



need and fill it.” He has an associate’s degree from Lindsey Wilson College; bachelor of science degree in agricultural education from the University of Kentucky; and a master’s degree in vocational education from Western Kentucky University. He also holds numerous professional licenses including plumbing, welding and electricity.

In addition to his positions of welding instructor and principal, Taylor has served in many roles over the years. Some include being a member and chairman of the KY Tech Principals' Advisory Board; president of the KY Association of Career and Technical Education (KACTE); president of the Lake Cumberland ATC Foundation; KY Tech statewide marketing team member; and an accreditation team member with the Council on Occupational Education (COE).

“If you want to learn about technical education in the US, serve on a COE team,” says Taylor. “I always came back from accreditation trips with great ideas to implement in our school. Tennessee and Georgia have exceptional technology programs.”

To his credit, Taylor has been personally responsible for many upgrades to the ATC. The teachers' lounge, built in 1990 as an extension of the main office is where “it all happens,” says Taylor. “Before school, after school, lunch and during breaks, this is where we discuss everything. My predecessor started the room and I finished it by opening up the front and part of one side to install windows for sunshine, light, and an unobstructed view.”



Taylor also constructed a new building to house the computer aided drafting, machine tool technology and industrial maintenance programs. It is located behind the main school.

“In my opinion, the building was absolutely critical so we could offer these



**Jeff Kerr and Chester Taylor
in the new vending area.**

programs to help the business and industry in our community,” says Taylor. “We worked hard, but the payoff has been helping our students and partnering with business and industry.”

During the 2003-04 school year, the ATC was converted from coal to gas heat. Taylor and his building custodian, Jeff Kerr, completely redid the room. It was cleaned, painted and a beam was installed

where the door had been. They turned the room into what is now a vending area.

“Putting the vending area at this end of the building alleviated a bottle neck at the other end of the building,” says Taylor. “Students exiting the building to go back to the high school were running into those who were trying to buy something. It was always a congested area and now the problem has been corrected.”

“When Mr. Taylor gets something on his mind, he wants it done. He wouldn’t ask you to do something that he wouldn’t or couldn’t do himself,” says Kerr. “He’s a great boss and I love him.”

“I might be biased, but I have the best faculty and staff in the state,” says Taylor. “We are a united team and our main goal is to help each student succeed.”

“Every time I have asked Mr. Taylor to improve something in my classroom for the benefit of students, he has always said yes and found a way to make it happen,” says Industrial Machine Maintenance

Instructor Steve Bennett. “Mr. Taylor is all action. I don’t know of anyone who can match his pace. He is not just my boss, but a valued friend.”

“Mr. Bennett serves as our head VICA advisor and does a great job,” says Taylor. “We have 100% membership for every T & I program in this school.”



**Steve Bennett and
Chester Taylor in the Industrial
Maintenance Technology lab.**



Top photo: Nokes and Taylor. Bottom photo from left to right: Taylor, Dr. Brent Askins (WKU) and Nokes.

“If it wasn’t for Mr. Taylor, I wouldn’t be here. He is the one who started this program,” says Machine Tool Technology Instructor Rodney Nokes. “No matter what the program needed, he found a way to get the money to buy the equipment. We have spent approximately \$17,000 for new computers over this past year.”

“A table top trainer for this program, at a cost of approximately \$6,500 was bought by the Russell Co. Industrial Authority. They have also allowed us to use five machines at a leased cost of \$1.00 per year for each machine,” says Taylor. “Mr. Robert Rapone, the CEO of Bruss North America (an injection molding company for the automotive

industry) told us that one of the reasons the company located in Russell Springs was because of the technology taught at our school.”

“As a result of this partnership with Bruss, my students have had an opportunity to co-op at the company,” says Nokes. “It’s great because there are more of our students placed there than anywhere else.”



Welding Instructor Jeff Adams (who has been a welder at nuclear power plants in four states) is held in high regard by Taylor because he was hired as the welding instructor when he (Taylor) became principal.

“I appreciate Mr. Adams,” says Taylor. “I taught here for 12 years before becoming principal and it’s nice to know that someone can take it above and beyond where you left the program. It makes me feel good.”

“This is not about me and I could not have done it without his support,” says Adams. “He is great when it comes to finding ways to get more equipment. Have you ever heard of ‘Git R Done?’ That’s Chester Taylor! He was able to pick up a large piece of machinery donated by GGF Heritage Mfg. (out of

Ohio). The equipment makes the bracket that holds the ‘black box’ on every aircraft in the sky. It has given our students an opportunity to learn how to shear metal from ¼” up to 10’ long. It was amazing what he had to do in order to get the equipment here and then get it placed into the building.”



“Mr. Taylor is the type of man who will get what you need to help the student and program,” says Carpentry Instructor Charles Roy. “I’ve seen him take money out of his own pocket to support this program. In turn, he has my complete support.”

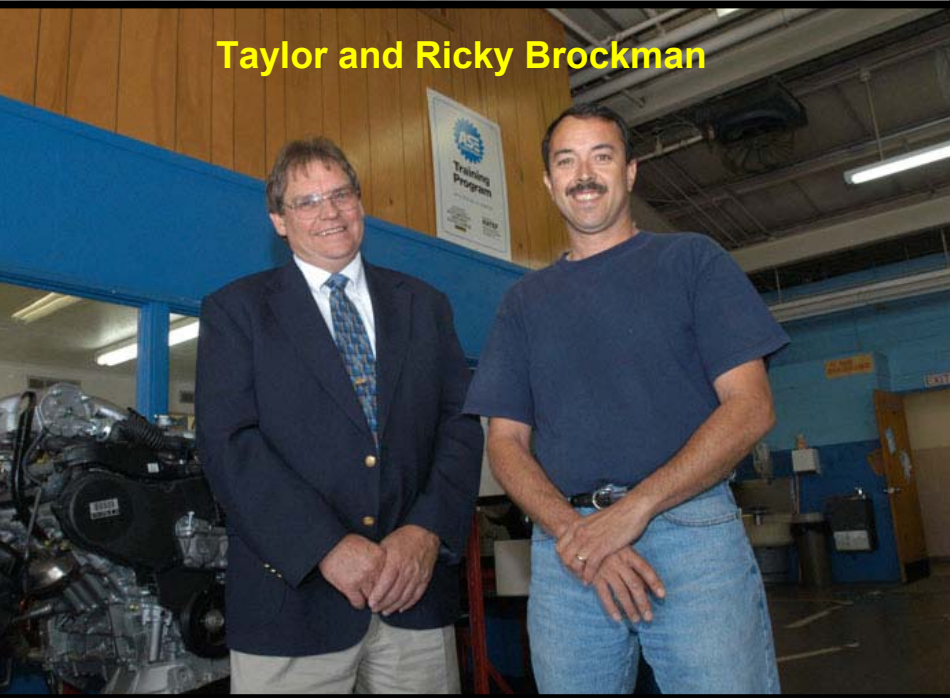
A mutual admiration is evident. Taylor says, “If I took a class at this school, this (Roy) is the instructor I would have. He is the most patient and caring

teacher that I have ever seen. One of the things that I am most proud of is that we have never had a student to lose a finger – that’s because Mr. Roy is our safety coordinator in this school.”

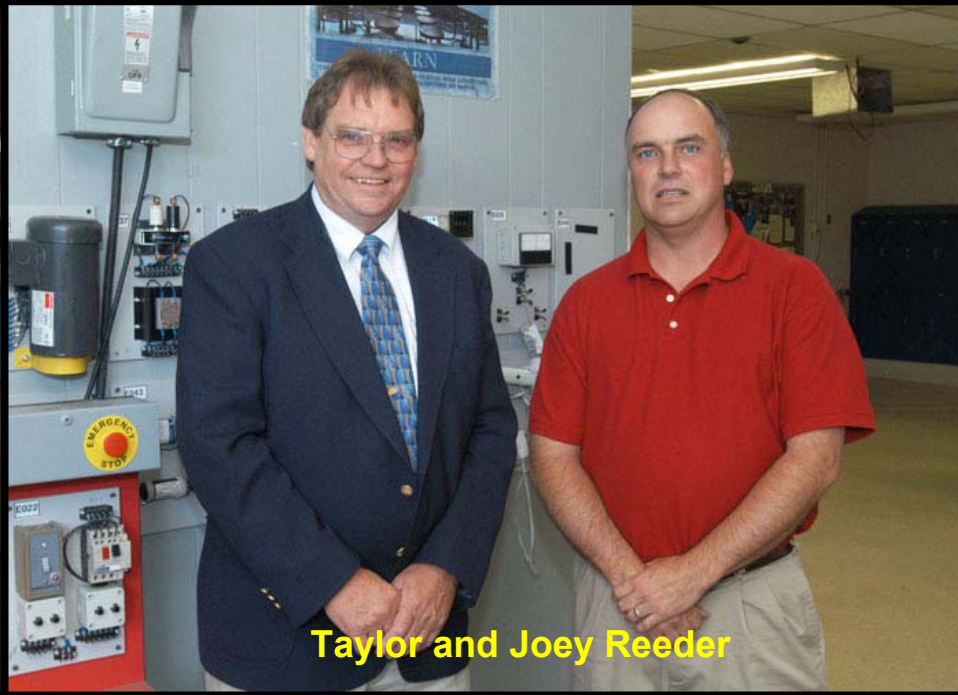
Automotive Technology Instructor Ricky Brockman, who is also a product of the ATC, says, “Mr. Taylor’s intentions are always noble.”

“People call Mr. Brockman from all over the surrounding states to trouble shoot power boats on Lake Cumberland. He is well respected,” says Taylor. “As far as his dedication in the classroom, I can say that I have never come into his shop where he wasn’t teaching students and the students that come out of this program know something about automotive technology.”

Taylor and Ricky Brockman



Taylor and Joey Reeder



Electrical Technology Instructor Joey Reeder was hired by Taylor five years ago. “I’m most proud of this teacher because he is one of our own. He’s good with students and he’s a winner,” says Taylor. “He’s the kind of employee that every employer wants to have.”

“I think Mr. Taylor is the most kind hearted person for both the staff and the students. I’ve seen him take out his own money to pay for student organization dues, clothes and even medicine,” says Reeder. “He knows how to help all of us because he has been in the field and he knows what we need to do our jobs. Mr. Taylor has helped me get what I need for my classroom. He is the kind who always shows us how appreciative he is for what we do.”

School Secretary Carlotta Yarberry began working at the ATC in October 2004; however, she quickly learned that Chester Taylor is “not only a wonderful boss, but a very special person.”

“Mr. Taylor has left unquestionable proof that he has been here and touched the lives of many. He has left a trail, an impression and large footprints that we will all remember him by,” says Carlotta. “He will be remembered by the fact that he showed how much he cared - one person at a time and that is a memory worth leaving behind.”

Question and Answer Session with Chester Taylor

Q: What do you think people will remember you by?

“Git R Done!” Whatever it takes to Git R Done. I don’t ask anybody to do anything that I haven’t done or wouldn’t do.

Q: Is there anything you would have done differently in your tenure as principal?

Work more to make more to give more!



Chester and Carlotta



Q: What do you consider your most important contribution in this field during your tenure?

With the assistance of other people, I'm proud that we have been able to acquire the equipment that we have at the technology center to benefit the community and our students for the future.

I feel that the most important contribution has been helping students to increase their earning power. I look back and there are so many examples. I had a welding student who came to class and he was 19 years old. He didn't have anything. He had never even driven a vehicle of any kind. One day, I took him to the back track and put him in my pick-up truck to teach him

forward, reverse and drive around the parking lot. I took him down to the driver's license office to take his test to get his permit. Then, he drove my truck around to get more experience. Some of the teachers asked me if I was afraid he would wreck my truck. Well, the way I look at it is, we'd just get another truck – I could do the same thing. He passed his driving test and got a job. He now lives in a brick home. He has two children, a pick-up truck and works every day. He's a great contribution to society. That's what it's all about.

Q: What do you consider the most important issue facing vocational-technical education today?

One issue is trying to keep up with the technology. It is expensive and we are going to be pressed to be able to keep it funded to the appropriate levels.

Q: What do you consider the single most important legislation impacting vocational-technical education?

The Carl D. Perkins plan has been great for vocational-technical education. It has changed so many students' lives and increased the value of career and technical education in the state and nation.

Over my tenure, one of the projects that helped the image of vocational technical education in the state of Kentucky (more than anything) was the \$6M Equipment-Student Showcase in 2001. This single event provided the KY Tech system with an additional (and unexpected) \$3M in equipment funding from our legislature.

Q: What guidance or advice would you provide to any new principal within the system?

Find a need and fill it! Don't be afraid to roll up your sleeves and take a chance. I've never been afraid to take a chance of doing something to be able to render a service and that's what we have done.





Q: In looking over your experiences, what major goal did you achieve as principal?

A major goal of mine has always been to make a contribution to the school that would impact the community and strengthen the image of vocational technical education. I think the computer aided drafting and computer aided machine programs have helped the image of the school and earned a value in the community. Cooperating with the needs of industry has been important when we added new programs - it's also helped our students' earning power.

Q: What are the qualities that make a good principal?

Honesty, integrity and character are the basic foundation – of course that pertains to everything. After that, you have to have the stamina to work hard.

Q: How does an ATC integrate into the community?

It's important to render services to students, parents, high schools, business and industry by filling their needs.

Q: What do you consider the positive influences that student organizations have on vocational-technical education participants?

No doubt, student organizations develop a sense of responsibility and leadership skills. No doubt, student organizations give participants confidence in almost every area of life – from learning how to get along with others to getting up in front of people to make speeches. I was an FFA officer for three years in high school and probably wouldn't have succeeded in education without that experience.

Chester Taylor wanted to leave a couple of lasting thoughts with everyone.

“I want to express my appreciation for having the opportunity to serve in career and technical education. I wanted to combine academic education and skills training in my career and I've had that golden opportunity.



"To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived...this is to have succeeded."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I think Mary Stratton has done more for the system than any one individual within our system. She has worked tirelessly to move us forward. I want to also say that former Governor Paul Patton did more for vocational education, while in office, than any other governor prior to him.

Finally, finding a need and filling it is my motto and we have been able to fill many needs. But it's also necessary to make other people feel important.



KENTUCKY
Technically Speaking

Kentucky
UNBRIDLED SPIRIT

Good News Flash #123
June 13, 2005